



Autumn Driving Is Trickier Than You Think

Back to school activities, football games, and a new TV season are a sure sign that autumn is here. But the crisp air and rustic colors are also a clear signal that we need to prepare for the challenges that autumn driving may bring.

Days Are Shorter

Autumn's shorter days mean less light, making it more difficult to see the road, other drivers, roadway hazards, as well as pedestrians and cyclists. Slow down and increase your following distance. Switch on your headlamps as soon as you notice a reduction in visibility to increase your ability to see and your chances of being seen. The sun is also much lower in the sky at sunrise and sunset this time of year causing a dangerous blinding effect. Lower your visor to help block reflected light, and keep windows clean and streak-free to help maximize your view.

School's Back in Session

The fall season means schools are in session. Children may not be as readily visible in the early morning hours and in the glare of the setting sun. Young people distracted by friends, cell phones and MP3 players may carelessly step out into traffic. Be on the lookout for flashing school zone lights, as well as school buses loading and unloading children.

Animals Increase Driving Dangers

Autumn is a time of activity in the animal world. It's mating season for many animals and creatures are looking for food and shelter for the upcoming winter. Watch out for wildlife that can enter the roadway at any time. Pay attention to animal crossing signs. Scan the roadway and roadsides, and drive at a safe speed to increase your chances of avoiding a collision.

Falling Leaves

Autumn leaves are beautiful, but once they start falling, they can become a serious driving hazard.

Fallen leaves can hide potholes or other roadway hazards, and can obscure pavement markings on the road, making it difficult to determine shoulder and lane widths. Wet leaves are slippery and can reduce traction. They can also get clogged under your wiper blades, impeding wiper performance and visibility. Keep your windshield clear of leaves, and avoid hard acceleration or braking and sudden turns when driving through fallen leaves.

Quick-Changing Conditions

Fall is a time of variable weather. Clear nights can give way to foggy mornings, and heavy showers can come on suddenly, changing road conditions from ideal to miserable in a matter of minutes. Make sure your wiper blades, lights, tires and brakes are in good working order.

Slow down and increase your following distance to help steer clear of danger in poor conditions.

With autumn's arrival, it's also a good time to remind yourself that any distraction—whether using a cell phone, programming in-vehicle controls or reaching for objects in the vehicle—can lead to a challenging driving situation. Doing your part to decrease distractions while driving will not only make you a safer driver, it will benefit all who share the nation's roads for many autumns to come.

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